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MALAWI

MTPDS Program Monthly Newsletter

Malawi Teacher Professional Development Support (MTPDS) program is a 3-year USAID-funded project supporting the professional development of teachers in Malawi and implementation of the National Primary Curriculum (NPC). MTPDS is being implemented by Creative Associates International, RTI International and Seward Inc. in close collaboration with the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology.

EGRA Coordinating Committee sets targets for literacy learner achievement



EGRA Coordinating Committee meets in Lilongwe

The MoEST turned out in force to support the 2nd meeting of the Early Grade Reading Assessment (EGRA) National Steering Committee in Lilongwe on 7th February. This committee is tasked with the responsibility of overseeing the implementation of EGRA in Malawi and ensuring that the capacity to implement

EGRA is transferred to the MoEST before the end of MTPDS in March 2013. The meeting, which was chaired by Mrs. Chrissie Soko, Assistant Director (Sciences) in the Department of Inspection and Advisory Services (DIAS), drew 25 participants from all relevant MoEST departments and institutions. The Director of Basic Education, Mr. McKnight Kalanda, was also in attendance.

The Committee unanimously adopted a set of national benchmarks and targets for learner achievement across a range of reading skills, including the specific number of letters per minute a student should be able to name and the number of words per minute

they should be able to read fluently, in both Standards 2 and 4. These benchmarks are significant because it is widely acknowledged that learners must achieve a basic level of fluency in reading before they can read with comprehension, which is a necessary prerequisite for using textbooks independently and being able to access information in any subject.

At the meeting Odala Banda, the MTPDS EGRA Manager, provided an update on the successful implementation of EGRA 2011-12 by MoEST. Results of this study will be available in April 2012. This year's survey included a sample of 150 schools and assessed 3,000 randomly selected learners nationwide. Mr. Banda also provided details of the planned expansion of the MTPDS literacy intervention to the 5 new districts of Mzimba North, Ntcheu, Blantyre Rural, Zomba Rural and Thyolo, with the first round of training commencing in February.

The Committee reviewed its own terms of reference and dedicated itself to undertake a review of the language in education policy as it affects the teaching and learning of literacy in early grades. In his closing remarks the Director of Basic Education, Mr. McKnight Kalanda, underlined the importance of EGRA as a key outcome indicator for the primary education sector in Malawi. He also emphasized the relevance of the EGRA results in informing and shaping both the CPD and pre-service training curricula.

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MTPDS committed to improved monitoring and evaluation of NPC



Deputy Director of DIAS, Ms Thoko Banda (left) making a statement while MTPDS M&E Advisor looks on and (left) posing with participants

IN its efforts to support implementation of the National Primary Curriculum (NPC), MTPDS conducted capacity building training for the Ministry of Education Science and Technology (MoEST) targeting Primary Education Advisors (PEAs). The 94 participants drawn from 34 education districts of the country benefited from a three-day training in Monitoring and Evaluation of the curriculum.

The objective of the training primarily was to introduce the PEAs to the concepts of Monitoring & Evaluation, help them understand the importance of the NPC M&E Framework, as well as sharpen their skills in monitoring and evaluating the implementation of the NPC. The main activities of the

training included training on conducting classroom observations and interviews to assess teachers' essential teaching skills and learner performance.

From 29th January to 1st February, 2012, 45 PEAs from the North, Central West and Central East Education Divisions attended the training at Mponela where the Director of the Department of Inspection and Advisory Services (DIAS), Mr. Raphael Agabu, officially opened the training. From 6th to 8th February, 2012, 49 PEAs from the South East, South West and Shire Highlands Education Divisions attended the training in Blantyre where the Deputy Director of DIAS, Ms Thoko Banda, officially opened the training.

After the training the PEAs proceeded to collect data from a sample of 100 schools in 32 educational districts throughout the country. Using the data collected, the PEAs briefed parents and communities through local School Management Committees (SMCs) and Parent Teacher Associations (PTAs) about the current state of teacher skills, learner performance levels, availability and condition of teachers' and learners' materials and support provided to teachers. This activity is designed to generate discussions at the local level to develop and review respective school improvement plans. The next step will be to analyze data from all districts with a view to informing policy and strategic deliberations on teacher competencies and learner outcomes at the national

Strengthening the frontline of literacy

MTPDS, in collaboration with MoEST, has embarked on the expansion of its literacy intervention programme to five additional districts: Mzimba North, Ntcheu, Zomba Rural, Blantyre Rural and Thyolo. These districts have joined Salima and Ntchisi, which began receiving MTPDS literacy intervention activities last year. MTPDS is committed to strengthening the frontline of the education system through promoting early grade literacy. In preparation for rolling out the literacy programme to

the additional 5 districts, MTPDS organized a Training of Trainers (TOT) workshop, which was conducted at Mponela on 22nd-24th February 2012, for its field staff consisting of District Teacher Training Coordinators (DTTCs) and District Literacy Coordinators (DLCs) together with key MoEST counterparts, to equip them with skills for facilitating the literacy programme. As a part of the three-day training, the team reviewed Literacy Intervention Module 1 which outlines effective literacy teaching strategies and other

concepts to promote early literacy. Subsequently, at the end of the month, these facilitators travelled to the five new districts to train Primary Education Advisors (PEAs) and Senior Education Methods Advisors (SEMs) in preparation for delivery of training at the zonal level for Standards 1-4 classroom teachers. This training will provide teachers with skills on how to teach early literacy more effectively, while also ensuring the participation of PEAs in these literacy programmes through effective monitoring and support.

MTPDS completes divisional consultation meetings



MTPDS Result Area Manager posing with EDMs, DEMs and TTC Officials at one of the division consultation meetings

At the beginning of the month, MTPDS Result Area Managers Mr. Charles Gunsaru (Policy Advisor), Dr. Absalom Phiri (CPD Advisor) and Mr. Odala Banda (EGRA Manager) completed their joint consultation trip in the field sharing information with key MoEST officials, including Educational Division Managers (EDMs), District Education Managers (DEMs) and other education stakeholders on significant Ministry activities supported by MTPDS. The consultation meetings provided a forum to share and discuss the National Strategy for Teacher Education and Development (NSTED); provide updates on Continuous Professional Development (CPD) activities and plans; and disseminate the Early Grade Reading Assessment (EGRA) 2010 baseline report.

The NSTED portion of the consultation, which was reported in last month's newsletter, were completed in February reaching the remaining Ministry stakeholders from all 34 education districts, 6 education divisions and 6 public teacher training colleges (TTCs).

During the CPD briefing, Dr. Phiri discussed three main issues with the EDMs and DEMs. Firstly, he sought their close involvement in monitoring

CPD activities to assess their impact on the performance of teachers and learners in the schools. So far, even though regular classroom observations have been conducted, there have been scanty observation reports from such monitoring. It was agreed that more observation reports would help inform both MoEST education managers and MTPDS in informing the course of action in subsequent CPD activities.

The second CPD issue focused on preparing the education managers for a smooth transition of responsibility in carrying out CPD activities in schools after the end of the project in March 2013. This was done by informing the EDMs and the DEMs about the content of CPD trainings that have already been delivered to head teachers and Standards 1-4 classroom teachers. Each DEM was provided with the modules that head teachers and teachers have used during their training.

Thirdly, the team informed the managers that MTPDS approaches the delivery of CPD by using existing structures in order to promote sustainability. This is the reason why PEAs were assigned the role of CPD trainers because it complements their regular duties of supervising teachers by

making them more familiar with the content of training teachers are receiving through CPD.

During the consultation meetings, MTPDS and MoEST took the opportunity to share some of the key findings and recommendations from the EGRA 2010 baseline report with the EDMs, DEMs, Senior Education Methods Advisors (SEMAS) and TTC Principals and Heads of language departments. Copies of the report were disseminated to those in attendance. The report is a result of a national baseline assessment in 2010 of early grade reading skills which measured the rate at which students develop critical skills that will enable them to learn and read effectively.

Research has shown that the skills assessed are predictive of later reading ability, and that they can be improved through effective teaching. Key findings of the report showed that 73% of learners in Std. 2 and 42 % in Std. 4 scored zero words per minute on oral reading fluency and that many students have a lack of knowledge of letter-sound relationship and display inability to decode or sound out words. Scores were low in all sub-tests, and are among the weakest encountered so far in countries where EGRA has been conducted.

Continuous Professional Development Updates

Literacy 2 approved and ready for rollout

FEBRUARY was set aside by the Continuous Professional Development (CPD) team as materials development month. During this month, Literacy Module 2 was finalized, approved by USAID and is currently undergoing printing in readiness for roll out in March. The teacher training specialists also worked on developing drafts of content for Literacy Modules 3 and 4 which will be used as input to the CPD writers' workshop scheduled to take place in mid-March. In addition, the team was able to put together the planned CPD training schedules for the rest of the year 2012.

The process for rolling out CPD Literacy 2 module for teachers will follow the cascade model, similar to the model utilized for conducting

Leadership 3 training for school leaders. Trainers of Trainers (TOTs) will undergo preparations in a workshop from 12-13 March, and will then go out beginning on 19th March in 10 pairs of mobile teams to conduct the Training of Facilitators (TOF) at the district level. After undergoing TOF, the district-level facilitators will then conduct Literacy 2 training for teachers at the cluster level. Two days of training will be provided per cluster.

The other major CPD activity for next month will be a writers' workshop for developing Literacy Modules 3 and 4 which has been scheduled to take place soon after the TOT. This will be done under the guidance of Dr David Porcaro.

Newest members of MTPDS team

IN order to enhance its presence and support in the field, MTPDS has appointed two new positions at the divisional level, thus creating new teams at each divisional education office. The two new positions are Divisional Monitoring and Evaluation Officer (DMOs), who will be responsible for M&E activities at the divisional level, and Divisional Accounts Officer (DAOs), who will be responsible for the disbursement of CPD training funds and the collection and processing of CPD training reconciliations. The five DMOs began working with MTPDS at the end of February while the six DAOs will officially begin in early March. All 11 new divisional officers were provided an orientation at the MTPDS head office from 22-23 February. The addition of the DMOs and DAOs is expected to enhance the project's ability to provide the needed support, facilitation, monitoring, and evaluation from the divisional level down to schools. We welcome our new team members and look forward to their contributions to the project.

Events Calendar for April 2012

Policy:

By 20th March: Finalise draft paper on teacher competencies

CPD:

12-13 March: Training of Trainers workshop for Literacy 2

Beginning 19 March: Training of Facilitators workshop at district level for Literacy 2

14-16 March: CPD Writers workshop

Early Grade Literacy Assessment

4-5 March: Training of Standard 1-4 teachers on Literacy Intervention Module 1

12-15 March: Training of Facilitators for Literacy Intervention Module 2

19-22 March: Training of Facilitators for Literacy Intervention Module 2

26-30 March: Training of Standard 1 teachers on Literacy Intervention Module 2 in 5 districts

Quality Teaching and Learning materials

19-30 March: Standard 3 Textbook Revision Workshop at MIE

Monitoring & Evaluation:

1-30 March: Piloting school report card

Divisional M&E Officers (DMOs)

Mike Khoza – Mzuzu (North)

Peter Jinazali – Kasungu (Central East)

Clare Likagwa – Lilongwe (Central West)

Lloyd Kalata – Zomba (South East)

Christopher Gandidzanwa – Blantyre (South West)

TBD – Mulanje (Shire Highlands)

Divisional Accounts Officers (DAOs)

Makaiko Mbale-Mzuzu (North)

David Mandiza – Kasungu (Central East)

Frank Harawa – Lilongwe (Central West)

Patrick Mdhuli – Zomba (South East)

Elida William – Blantyre (South West)

Sylvester Sandifolo Mulanje (Shire Highlands)

Note from the Editor: MTPDS Program Monthly Newsletter intends to provide insights on activities, achievements and success stories from the field. We are therefore inviting comments, contributions and tips for teacher professional development. Please send your contributions to the Editor, MTPDS Program, Area 10/612, Tsoka Road, Private bag B481, Lilongwe, Tel: (+265) 1 794 977. E-mail: info@mtpds.rti.org, Web: www.mtpds.rg. For useful downloadable resources: <http://www.mtpds.org/resources/CPD-manuals>